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INFORMATION REPORT

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1. RBD Magdeburg has 1,398 kilometers of track in operation and handles 390 freight trains daily. During March 1948, 51,621 cars were loaded and 44,017 cars unloaded. From January to March 1948, freight losses of all types included 480,000 kg of coal, of which 130,000 kg was recovered; 110,000 kg of fodder and food, of which 70,000 kg was recovered; 88,000 kg of machines, tools, and other material, of which 8,000 kg of machines and 20,000 kg of miscellaneous material were recovered. From December to March, the railroad police handled theft cases to the following extent:

December 1947	1,841	1,744 cleared
January 1948	2,638	2,510 cleared
February 1948	1,895	1,751 cleared
March 1948	1,744	1,744 cleared

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2. From January to March mass thefts on a large scale occurred at stations. About six hundred persons were involved in smaller communities such as Rothensee, Barleben, and Meizendorf. The railroad reported itself helpless against such depredations, since the local police gave insufficient assistance and motorized squads were necessary. The Magdeburg office had hoped to have a special car for police work but had been unable to get tires.

3. A protest from the Reichsbahn that the courts were too mild in their sentences for robbery of coal and seed transports was rejected by Minister of Justice Hübener (also minister president). He denied that the courts were too lenient and stated that the true problem lay in providing the population at least the survival minimum in fuel. At the same time, at a conference on railroad and police difficulties in the office of the Minister of Interior, on 12 April 1948, it was decided to increase penalties for thefts from railroad installations and a suggestion was made that public opinion be brought to bear through exposing the criminals publicly. A draft was prepared making the punishment two years' imprisonment and/or up to 10,000 RM fine for certain types of thefts and 150 RM fine for trespassing on railroad property. It was agreed that convicted persons should serve their terms at hard labor, but the question of public exposure was left for future discussion. It was also recommended that the amnesty of 18 March 1948 should not prevent severity towards crimes committed after that date.

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4. It was pointed out at the conference of 12 April that much railroad theft arose from the weakness of the railroad police and the lack of assistance from local police forces. RBD Halle had only 630 police personnel, whereas Dresden had 1,600. Moreover, all Derutra transports had to have special guards derived from the railroad police. It had been necessary for RBD Halle to pay its office personnel a special bonus to perform local guard duties before and after regular office hours.

5. Ministerial Director Zaiser, head of the Land police, stated his basic attitude as follows: Because the railroad police were not subordinated to the regular state police, the entire responsibility for railroad security rested on the railroad itself. The state police office, he believed, had done everything possible to assist, but the five hundred police personnel assigned for railroad work had been recalled for special border police work and could not be replaced. The Land police had had two thousand of its 5600 complement removed for special border assignments and therefore had only 3600 persons free. Of these, 140 had already been assigned as guards for Derutra transports. In spite of the fact that Thuringia, Saxony, and Brandenburg complained about the theft of their goods in transit through Saxony-Anhalt, the Land police could do nothing more.

6. It was requested that Reichsbahn Directorates Halle and Magdeburg prepare a report on length of track, goods turnover, and traffic function for the Land government. Until funds were made available from the central offices in Berlin, Land Saxony-Anhalt agreed to assume necessary additional costs of police plans, and it also promised to try to correct injustices in food distribution and to improve living conditions generally.

7. It was suggested that an emphatic propaganda campaign for railroad security and lessening of thefts be initiated by all possible means -- press, radio, theatre, political parties and organizations, and the trade unions. Particular attention was to be given to the attitude of the Labor Offices, which had taken the stand that the only persons assigned to police work should be those who were incapable of other occupation. This mistaken attitude, probably derived from SMA orders to assign all able-bodied persons to production work, had to be corrected and emphasis put on obtaining additional police personnel. An investigation was also ordered into the possibility of using women for police work.

8. FDGB issued a proclamation on 1 April 1948 urging men and women of twenty to forty-five to sign up for police work. They were promised beginning pay of 275 RM, Class II rations, and shoes and uniforms. In spite of this and similar appeals, no one signed up in Saxony-Anhalt.

[redacted] Comment: Lack of enthusiasm for police work is partly attributable to the very low prestige of the service. Police officials in Halle are reported to have stolen sugar, food, and gasoline from freight cars and to have made off with the goods under pretext of arresting one of their group as the criminal. The police were also believed to have warned Dr. Hennemann, Legal Adviser and Second Vice President of the Landtag, of his approaching arrest in time to allow him to escape. He disappeared from Halle on 10 March 1948.) 50X1-HUM

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